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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5463

UNCLAS GABORONE 001138

STATE FOR AF/PDPA, S/GAC, IIP/AF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KHIV](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BC](#)

SUBJECT: PAS GABORONE SUPPORTS GENDER AND HIV/AIDS WORKSHOP USING
PEPFAR FUNDS

¶1. SUMMARY: PAS Gaborone supported a two-day workshop on gender, violence and HIV/AIDS with government social service representatives, the police and NGOs. Hosted in a northeastern Botswana mining town, the workshop had an impact on the 50 community leaders who attended and the citizens they represent. PAS Gaborone support of the workshop and the larger government awareness campaign against domestic violence and HIV/AIDS gave important exposure to U.S. Mission efforts on social issues that affect the everyday lives of people in Botswana, while providing communities the means to combat domestic violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. END SUMMARY

¶2. PAS Gaborone partnered with the Botswana Department of Women's Affairs to support a workshop for fifty community leaders outside of Gaborone on domestic violence and HIV/AIDS. The two-day event was held November 19-20 in Selebi-Phikwe, a mining town 400 km northeast of the capital. It was part of the national awareness campaign "Sixteen Days of Activism on Violence against Women and Children." PAS supported the workshop with PEPFAR funding for the venue and the travel of Cultural Affairs Specialist Naomi Makgolo.

¶3. Entitled "Defending Women, Defending Rights," the workshop sensitized community leaders to the relationship between domestic violence and HIV/AIDS. The community leaders were also preparing to host in their town the national commemoration of World AIDS Day on December 1 so the workshop helped to link the issues of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS.

¶4. Presenters, topics and participants: The workshop presenters were drawn from the Botswana Women's Affairs Department, Botswana Police Service, the NGO Botswana Network of Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) and PAS Gaborone. In addressing factors associated with the spread of HIV/AIDS, the presenters took the fifty participants through a range of topics, beginning with the principle of women's rights as human rights. The PAS Cultural Affairs Specialist's presentation on gender and development linked academic concepts to the reality of gender and HIV/AIDS for the participants. Other presenters reviewed laws affecting the status of women, the effects of cohabitation and the recourse available to HIV/AIDS victims in facing stigma in the workplace. The participants included dikgosi (tribal chiefs), clergy, village development committee members, home-based care volunteers, trade unions representatives, women/men/youth civic organization representatives, and counseling service providers.

¶5. Impact: The campaign "Sixteen Days of Activism on Violence against Women and Children" is the government's flagship national awareness effort on domestic violence and ties into similar commemorations in other countries. Domestic violence is now identified as a critical component of gender inequality and a contributing factor in the transmission of HIV/AIDS. PAS Gaborone is a regular participant in and supporter of the awareness campaign. This commitment (and the PEPFAR funds that help underwrite it) gave important exposure to U.S. Mission efforts on social issues that affect the everyday lives of people in Botswana while providing community leaders and members the means to combat gender-based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

¶6. Media coverage: The workshop generated very good media coverage, reflecting the importance attached to gender, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS here. Leading independent daily Mmegi (\may-hee\, The Reporter) ran a full-page story with photo on December 12. Entitled "Women, That Slight Kick is Abuse!", the piece decried the continuing lack of awareness among women concerning issues of domestic violence and the existence of programs

and laws to help them out of their problems. It also linked the plight that women in Botswana face regarding abuse with well-known cases in other countries, including that of Whitney Houston in the U.S. The article concluded by quoting the representative of the Women's Affairs Department that issues of violence and abuse are a joint responsibility of the government and the community. Government is doing a lot as evidenced by the abolition of marital powers. However, women believe that they will be victimized when fighting for their rights hence most women are still bottling up their concerns, the representative concluded.

17. Independent weekly Botswana Gazette ran an article November 26 entitled "Women Urged to be Assertive." It carried remarks by a local headman at the workshop that women should unite and fight abuse and not feel discouraged, and that cases of abuse that they were receiving at the customary (tribal) court were overwhelming. The article also had remarks by the PAS Cultural Affairs Specialist concerning the economic progress of women in relation to domestic abuse, and that the remedy to men having been left behind in the struggle against violence is to give preference to neither gender in order to bring respect to the family.

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